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**THE PLACE OF JACKSONVILLE, ILLINOIS, IN  
THE HISTORY OF THE NORTHWEST**

## THE PLACE OF JACKSONVILLE, ILLINOIS, IN THE HISTORY OF THE NORTHWEST

BY ENSLEY MOORE

The State of Illinois was admitted to the Union in 1818. Morgan County received its first settlers in 1818, and was organized on the first Monday in March, 1823. Jacksonville, the county seat of Morgan County, which then included Cass and Scott counties, was laid out on March 10, 1825. This last act was, as I shall show, one of the most important in its influence upon the history of the coming State and of the great Northwest. And by Northwest is meant the region north and west of Illinois to the Canadian line and to the Rocky Mountains first, and ultimately to the Pacific Ocean.

The largest early immigration into Illinois and into the Sangamon Country, in which Jacksonville was located, was from the Southern States — notably Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia; and of the brightest, ablest, and most ambitious of these alert Americans, Jacksonville received its full share, its settlers being largely from the South.

Joseph Duncan, from Kentucky, a hero of the War of 1812, and John J. Hardin, also from Kentucky, were two of the most prominent upbuilders of Illinois, of Jacksonville, and of the regions beyond to the north and west. Both were subsequently members of Congress, and the latter was afterward Governor of Illinois. Hardin “gloriously fell on the field of Buena Vista, Mexico”, along with his relatives, Colonels Clay and McKee.

In 1825 Jacksonville was like Jerusalem, “Beautiful for situation”, and so it yet remains. Its greatest orna-

ment, Illinois College, crowns a hill which commands a magnificent view.

But the Yankee, by which is meant a person from east of the Hudson, or of that ancestry in New York, was not slow in seeing the advantages of Jacksonville, or in helping to improve them. In fact two Kellogg brothers, "New York Yankees", were the first settlers of Morgan County. Then it was a race between natives of the South and of New England. The result was that, up to the time of the Civil War, Jacksonville was about half Southern and half Yankee. The New Englanders were also of the ablest, brightest, and most ambitious of their section; and the battle for the development of a place of potential influence was on.

Our "ancient history" records that Murray McConnell "passed up the Illinois river to Peoria in 1819". He soon returned to what was to be Morgan County, near Jacksonville, and took part as a lawyer in the first meeting of the Circuit Court in Morgan County. Mr. McConnell was born in Orange County, New York, on September 5, 1798, and at the age of fourteen started into the far West to make his fortune.

John Millot Ellis was born in Kene, New Hampshire, on July 14, 1793, of Welsh parentage. Mr. Ellis was graduated from Dartmouth College in 1822. On the day on which he completed his seminary course, he was inspired by Elias Cornelius, an educator of that day, to "build up an institution of learning which should bless the West for all time." Mr. Ellis was graduated from Andover in September, 1825, and in November of that year; after a journey of six weeks, he reached Kaskaskia, then the capital of Illinois and the most important town. "Mr. Ellis was of that type of mind and from that stock of mankind with whom it is an instinct to build colleges", and he was soon interested in plans for the establishment of what was then called a "Seminary" in Illinois.

Mr. Ellis had become a member of the Presbytery of Missouri, which then included Illinois. St. Louis was at that time the largest town near the settled part of Illinois. Few people had then settled north of the present line of the Wabash Railway. Mr. Ellis secured the appointment of a committee of Presbytery, consisting of himself and Elder Thos. Lippincott, afterwards a Presbyterian minister for many years. In January, 1828, they set out on a journey of investigation into the Sangamon Country. Shoal Creek people, near Alton, had already made offers for an institution.

The explorers continued until they came to Jacksonville. At this point "so charming was the landscape, so rich the soil around and so enterprising the people who had settled there, that Mr. Ellis appears to have concluded at once that this was the place for a Seminary in preference to other towns he visited. Within a few days with characteristic promptitude he purchased eighty acres of land and set the stakes for a building". Some money had already been subscribed, and the subscribers approved of the plans. Mr. Ellis then determined to move to Jacksonville in the summer of 1828.

Mr. Ellis was at that time in the employ of the American Home Missionary Society, to which he wrote, in a report under date of September 25, 1828:

A Seminary of learning is projected to go into operation next Fall. The subscription now stands at \$2,000 or \$3,000. The site is in this county. The half quarter section purchased for it is certainly the most delightful spot I have ever seen. It is about one mile north of the celebrated Diamond Grove, and overlooks the town and country for several miles around. The object of the Seminary is popular, and it is my deliberate opinion that there never was in our country a more promising opportunity to bestow a few thousand dollars in the cause of education and of missions.

The *Presbytery Reporter*, of Alton, in September, 1859, gives the following account:

Of this letter, as published in the *Home Missionary*, President Sturtevant says that it arrested the attention of the young men in the Divinity School at Yale College, and led to a correspondence between them and Mr. Ellis, and determined seven of them to a residence in Illinois and to aid in the building up of the College.

Having been sent to a meeting of the General Assembly, Mr. Ellis spent the summer of 1829 in the East. While there, he coöperated with this Yale Band in their efforts to raise ten thousand dollars which they had pledged, and was instrumental in the maturing of their plans. Two of them, Julian M. Sturtevant and Theoron Baldwin, arrived in Jacksonville in November, 1829, and instruction was begun by Mr. Sturtevant, on January 4, 1830, in what is now a part of Beecher Hall. The institution had been organized and named Illinois College, on motion of Judge Hall, an old settler and a trustee. Thus was founded the first great college west of Ohio.

It should be said that Mr. Ellis went on to help found Wabash College, Indiana. He also aided Marshall College, Michigan. After spending some time in the East in preaching, Mr. Ellis died at Nashua, New Hampshire, on August 6, 1855. At the time of his death he was engaged in arranging for a college in Nebraska.

The first class was graduated from Illinois College in 1835, and consisted of Jonathan E. Spilman and Richard Yates. The latter was to be the great War Governor of Illinois. At one time when plans to help the Union cause were under discussion, Lincoln said to his Cabinet: "I have a plan to open the Mississippi river by a man named Grant, which Dick Yates sent me." You may recall that "a man named Grant" did open the Mississippi River, and by that time Richard Yates had sent Lincoln — not Grant's plan alone — but Grant himself. For it was this Kentucky boy, trained in Illinois College, who sent Ulysses S. Grant into the nation's service. After three long

years of war "Dick" Yates's selection took command of all the armies and victory came in one short year. The Republic was saved not alone to the West and Northwest, but to all the American people, and to all mankind. Lincoln knew Yates's fidelity, and he did not trust him in vain.

Illinois College gave to the West scores of ministers who went out to preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ Jesus". Neither Time nor Eternity can measure the yield to these reapers in the "fields white to the harvest". These men not only gave their lives to saving souls in their homeland, but some went as foreign missionaries, and at least one died upon the hot shores of the "Dark Continent". Illinois College also gave to her own State and to some of the Northwest the first physicians educated in their profession within the State.

It was in the class of 1843 that Newton Bateman was graduated. He was destined to be the Nestor of teachers in the State, which in turn gave of her abundance to "the regions lying beyond". Young men and young women sprang full panoplied into the race of life educated for the work. It was not to the State alone that Bateman gave of his ripest years, though he made Knox College a power in the education of the young people of the Northwest. And still earlier than Bateman, Dr. Wm. S. Curtis was prepared for the presidency of Knox College by "Old Illinois".

In the winter of 1832-1833, President Edward Beecher of Illinois College wrote to President Day of Yale, requesting him to send a teacher whom he could recommend as a future professor. Mr. Day said that Jonathan B. Turner was the man, and "Prof. Turner", of "Yale, '33", entered into his labors at Illinois College that year. If Jonathan B. Turner had only given his devotion to learning and his unyielding opposition to hu-



man slavery to the West, it would have been enough. But he discovered the practical use of the osage orange plant and hedged the fields of the West with thousands of miles of fencing. But "the grand old man" was not content with this material contribution to the riches of the West. It was he who through long years of unsuccessful effort kept toiling and speaking and writing until at last the States and nation heard his voice, and the Agricultural College — now called the State University — was created. To-day all the Northwest, as well as the country at large, may thank Illinois College for bringing Jonathan B. Turner into the West, and sending him out to better mankind by the establishment of universities in every State. Out in the cemetery, in "the celebrated Diamond Grove" of Mr. Ellis's day, lie the remains of this American giant who toiled for the millions, and "Turner" is all the name needed to mark the spot.

Women had small chance for education in this region before 1825, but a new day dawned for the women of the West when Frances Brard Ellis, wife of John M. Ellis, began in her own humble home the work of teaching girls and young women. Through her efforts there was organized in 1830 and chartered in 1835 the Jacksonville Female Academy, the first such institution in Illinois. For this woman's school not only the State of Illinois but the West as well must ever be grateful. Tragic beyond words was the death of Mrs. Ellis and her two children in that "cholera year" of 1833. All three died within forty-eight hours of each other.

Dr. Truman O. Douglass, a graduate of Illinois College in 1865, and Secretary of the Congregational Home Missionary work in Iowa from 1882 to 1907, wrote a book a few years ago entitled "Pilgrims of Iowa", in which he refers to his denominational brethren. It is to be remembered that it was through Mr. Ellis's correspondence

that the Yale Band of Illinois came out to the West. Among them was Asa Turner, brother of Professor J. B. Turner, who went first to Quincy, Illinois.

From Douglass's book we have the following: " 'One event', says Mr. Turner in his autobiography, 'occurred that decided my future life. A band of students was formed for the purpose of going to Illinois and planting the institutions of learning and the gospel. I was invited to join them. I did so. J. M. Ellis, who had been sent by the American Home Missionary Society, was trying to plant an institution in Jacksonville. Correspondence with him led us to unite our efforts with his. The result was Illinois College. This shaped the whole course of my life after. The last year in the Seminary was taken up in this effort, and especially in raising means to plant the college.' " December 1, 1830, found Mr. Turner ministering to a church in Quincy, Illinois. As early as 1836 he began prospecting in Iowa, and in 1838 he became pastor of the church at Denmark, Iowa, where he continued for thirty years.

Reuben Gaylord came as a tutor to Illinois College in 1834, and remained for two and a half years. He, with six others at Yale, undertook to organize a Yale Band for Iowa. Although his efforts were in vain Gaylord came alone. Gaylord and Turner were the first Congregational ministers who settled in Iowa. Douglass calls these men "Patriarchs" in the church in Iowa. He speaks of Julius A. Reed as the third of these, and says that "he got his first taste of the West in a visit to his brother, Dr. M. N. Reed, of Jacksonville, Illinois". And so the good work went on and Jacksonville did service for Iowa as well as for Illinois.

The influence of good and great ministers is beyond estimate. Illinois College drew to Jacksonville and educated a young Tennessean named Robert W. Patterson. He was graduated in 1837, became a Presbyterian clergy-

man, and as pastor of the Second Church of that denomination in Chicago spent most of a long and influential life. Another young man, who was drawn to Jacksonville by its religious and educational attractions, was the Rev. Truman M. Post, a member of the Faculty for years, and for a still longer period a Congregational pastor in St. Louis. These were men of influence and power in their day.

Jacksonville had in its early citizenship men of fine business foresight and of great commercial activity and capability. Through them was brought about an era of material achievement in the West during the early part of the nineteenth century. They secured or assisted in the building of the first railroad north of the Ohio River and west of Pennsylvania. It was on November 8, 1838, that the first engine ran upon the "Northern Cross" Railroad, now the Wabash, which was opened to Jacksonville in 1839 and to Springfield in 1842. This was the beginning of the railway construction of that portion of the West which lay north of the Ohio River, and it was the means of opening the farther West to settlement and occupation. Chicago had no western railroad until 1849.

Returning to the subject of public education, Governor Joseph Duncan was one of the earliest advocates of this beneficent work. A volume entitled *Common School Advocate* was published in Jacksonville at an early date. This was one of the first such papers in the West, if not the first. It was published by Ensley T. and Calvin Goudy. The inspiration of Jacksonville always influenced the Goudys. William C. and Calvin Goudy, one as State Senator and the other as member of the Lower House, were among the most influential in securing the establishment of the State Normal University.

The men and women of Jacksonville were among the earliest in the West to establish State charitable institutions, and those for the insane, deaf and dumb, and the

blind were among their early accomplishments. The School for the Deaf was in fact a training school for the teachers and superintendents of other Western and Northwestern States.

When Abraham Lincoln appointed the first Governor of Dakota, which then included both North and South Dakota, he chose Dr. William Jayne, a graduate of Illinois College in 1847. In this capacity, Governor Jayne ruled over about four thousand whites and thirty thousand Indians. I am happy to say that the genial old man is still living in Springfield.

Citizens of Jacksonville, former students and graduates of Illinois College, and of the women's schools of Jacksonville, who have gone into the West and Northwest as teachers, are to be numbered by the scores if not by the hundreds. Without effort I call to mind a classmate, Professor R. H. Beggs, in Denver; and another, Professor Carl Gordon, in Spokane. Oakland, California, has a leading teacher from Illinois, and the State University of California has in its faculty a graduate of "Old Illinois".

"Murray McConnell passed up the Illinois in 1819", and afterward became a leading citizen of Jacksonville. He was a member of the legislature, a leading lawyer, a commissioner in building the first railroad which "blazed the track of empire westward", a general of militia, and an Auditor of the United States Treasury under President Pierce. By the help of his vote, Illinois was one of the first States to pass the amendment to the Federal Constitution abolishing slavery. But, in addition to these incidents from the life of General McConnell, he accomplished what was of more important and lasting effect upon the history of the State, of the Northwest, and of the nation. Of this I have written in another connection the following account:

A young man from New York State, but a native of Ver-

mont, came into Jacksonville in the late fall of 1833. Jacksonville was then the guiding star of ambitious men venturing into "the far west". The town had a population of about 1,600 or 1,700 souls. The population of Morgan County — then including Cass and Scott — was about 15,000. The state of Illinois had a population of about 300,000. Among these Stephen A. Douglas came, too small in size and weight to be noticeable. But, even then, strong enough to draw the attention and interest of persons of perception.

There have been many stories told since those faraway days of the first cholera year, of how and where this young stranger went and found friends and a home. But many of the stories are apt to have grown with the development of their hero, the "Little Giant".

The first and kindest and wisest friend that stripling from Vermont found in Illinois was Murray McConnell. By his advice Douglas did the things which eventuated in his becoming a citizen of Jacksonville, an organizer of the Democratic party in Illinois, a secretary of state of Illinois, a member of the legislature from Jacksonville, a judge of the Supreme Court of the state, a member of Congress, a United States Senator, a controller of the national Democratic party, a candidate for President, whereby Abraham Lincoln was elected; and, at last,

"When war winged its wide desolation,  
And threatened the land to deform",

Stephen A. Douglas, patriot and statesman, no doubt saved Illinois from Civil War within its own borders, and, next to Abraham Lincoln and U. S. Grant, probably did more than any one else to save the Republic. All this came about in part, through the kindly and wise act of Murray McConnell, in befriending a poor young man "in a strange land".

Time and space forbid a longer reference to the splendid things which have resulted from the influence of Jacksonville and of Illinois College. But one can not refrain from calling the attention of this Association to the fact that it was Stephen A. Douglas who valiantly stood against the surrender of our great Northwest, now styled



276 MISSISSIPPI VALLEY HISTORICAL AS

“The Inland Empire”, and the lands beside the far Pacific to the land-grabbing instinct and clutch of Great Britain. It was Stephen A. Douglas who saw the possibilities of the great Middle West, and carved out the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska, the latter including what is to-day North and South Dakota.

So the humble Christian minister, the ambitious college teacher, and the more ambitious young politician, each contributed a portion of that influence which made Jacksonville largely the Civilizer of the West.



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